



February 17, 2023

Testimony of R. Bruce Donald, Southern New England Manager, East Coast Greenway Alliance

Raised S.B. 998: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TAX ABATEMENT FOR CERTAIN CONSERVATION EASEMENTS.

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Dear Planning & Development Committee-

The East Coast Greenway Alliance strongly supports raised SB 998. The ECGA is a transformative infrastructure project of national and regional significance. It is an integrated recreation and transportation corridor for safe walking and biking stretching 3,000 miles from Maine to Florida, connecting our nation's most populated corridor. Currently, 35 percent of it is built, with over 100 miles of Connecticut's 200 total miles completed.

Recreational and multi-use (alternative transportation corridor) trails are the heart of Connecticut's outdoor recreation economy and a balanced transportation plan. State-designated greenways are recreational resources that often stretch across a patchwork of private, municipal, and state-owned lands. Private landowner hosts are critical to keeping trail corridors unbroken, but these lands are also the most vulnerable to disruption without incentives for protection as properties are developed or subdivided over time. The selective abatement of property taxes by a municipality under this raised bill is an excellent tool. There are quite a few hoops to go through, ensuring a fair and measured process.

The argument that this relatively small decrease in tax rolls would be detrimental to a community is unfounded. When trails are completed, abutting real estate sells faster and for more money than before. This decrease in tax receipts would also be limited because there would be a conservation easement placed on the designated trail corridor. Such an easement on a property can reduce the appraised value substantially.

Please ensure Connecticut will remain a trails leader by enacting this significant investment in Connecticut's quality of life.

Sincerely,

R Bruce Donald
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